

# An Interdisciplinary Approach to Care within the Occupational Therapy Equal Access Clinic: Addressing Health Related Disparities



Occupational Therapy

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## OT EAC Background



The Occupational Therapy (OT) specialty clinic within the Equal Access Clinic Network (EACN) at the University of Florida provides **free OT services to any adult, regardless of income or insurance status**. The University of Florida OT program was founded in 1961 with the OT EAC specialty clinic opening in 2014 (Equal Access, n.d.).

As of 2018, the percentage of adults age 0-64 **uninsured** in Alachua County is 12.2 or over 26,000 individuals (Well Florida Council, 2019). The clinic has expanded services from once a month to once a week and even launched a telehealth wing to reach even more members of the community during the pandemic.

As the importance of providing interdisciplinary care is emphasized in academic coursework, the OT EAC Board has worked to **establish partnerships** with several other clinics in the EAC Network. These partnerships create opportunities to **advocate for the role of OT** on an interdisciplinary team while **enhancing quality and continuity of care for EAC patients**.

## Interprofessional Rounds

In an effort to enhance quality of care in the EACN, the OT EAC Board decided to reach out to other clinics in the network to establish interprofessional rounds. These meetings allow students to gain a **deeper understanding of different health professions** in the care team and discuss how one profession's **treatment approach might complement or differ from another**. These meetings have also been a valuable opportunity to **advocate** for the role of OT and **promote referrals** between clinics. Interprofessional rounds began with the **Physical Therapy EAC**, and continued with **MD** students at the primary care clinics and **Pediatric** specialty clinic. The next meeting will include **PharmD** students. Each meeting features different case studies and discussion questions and typically ends with action steps to promote continuous quality improvement within the Network. Interdisciplinary collaboration is a critical skill for working in any healthcare setting. Opening channels of communication between clinics in the Network aims to address health disparities and promote the EACN's Mission to **"Provide Quality Comprehensive Care For All"** (Equal Access, n.d.)

## Diabetes Education Class

The EACN previously provided in-person Diabetes Education classes, which **did not include contributions from the discipline of occupational therapy** or a formalized method to interpret classes. Through an initiative to expand access to services, occupational therapy students within the EACN transitioned the classes to a **virtual platform** during the COVID-19 pandemic and focused on an initiative to **improve services to non-English speaking clients**.

This entailed **translating** promotional materials into Spanish, **recruiting** occupational therapy students from **diverse backgrounds** to serve as presenters and **interpreters**, and utilizing a **health literacy assessment** (Newest Vital Sign) standardized in both English and Spanish.

While second year OTD students are the primary presenters (alongside second and third year **PharmD** students), first year OTD students have the opportunity to aid in the presentation of select topics.

They have also been crucial to a **community outreach efforts** to recruit participants by contacting local diabetes support groups, podiatrists, community shelters, and pharmacies to market to the target population in Alachua county.

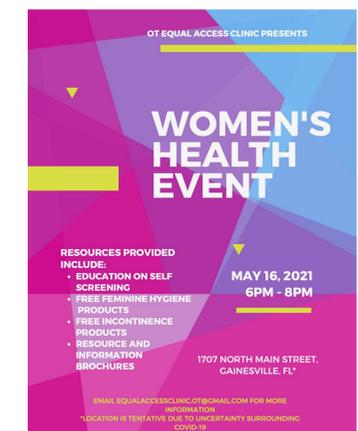


## Women's Health Initiative

In addition to working with individuals, another mission of occupational therapy is to work with populations to **promote health and wellness as part of the Triple Aim of Healthcare** (Braveman, 2016). Alachua County has a large homeless population of over 600 individuals on any given night (North Central Florida Alliance for the Homeless and Hungry, 2021). Therefore, to promote population health with women experiencing homelessness, the OT EAC has begun planning a Women's Health initiative in partnership with **MD and PA students** from the **Women's Night** specialty clinic.

The initiative aims to hold events in the community where individuals can receive **free feminine hygiene products** in addition to **education** on topics such as **self pelvic floor screenings** and **self breast exams**. They will also be connected to other resources according to their health needs.

Numerous students across professions and cohorts have been involved in the planning of the event, including logistics and goals, marketing strategies, educational materials, and **community outreach** efforts. The OT EAC looks forward to promoting women's health initiatives and addressing health inequities in homeless individuals when it is safe to host these events in person.



## References

Braveman, B. (2016). Health Policy Perspectives—Population health and occupational therapy. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 70, 7001090010. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2016.701002>

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